

Punjab-wide Environment Network formed through EcoSikh

Ludhiana, 2nd July, 2011, A Punjab-wide meeting of environment activists, religious organizations and Industry leaders agreed to form a network to save Punjab's environment.

The environment summit meeting was hosted by US-based organization Eco-sikh, which included the grass root environment organizations, activists, Government agencies, Industrialists and educationists from throughout the Punjab

The main objective was to create a grass-roots network to encourage cooperation to save Punjab's green environment and to ensure healthy future for its inhabitants, both human and animal. After initial presentations by experts, all participants took part in discussions and agreed that creating public awareness is one of the major tasks ahead of any worthwhile environmental work in Punjab.

EcoSikh was launched in 2009 and it works with UN and other international bodies to highlight Sikh environment and environment activism based on Sikh teachings. It is planning to collect information of all the grass roots organization in Punjab and will make it available on its website.

The meeting was held at Ramgariah Girls College, Millar Ganj at Ludhiana.

KEY QUOTES

Prominent activist Baba Balbir Singh Seechewal welcomed the formation of a Punjab environment network: "All Sikhs of Guru Nanak are EcoSikhs and environment is a cause of helping the entire humanity (*Sarbat da Bhalla*) and all religions should stand up to save the Punjab to revive its green splendor and spread this message from their religious centres."

"We cannot allow fresh and pure Punjab river waters to become poisonous which is bringing so much destruction in major sections of Punjab and is affecting the health of millions. The same E grade polluted water is being offered in our *Gurdwaras* and *sarovars*. All religious personalities should join to become the voice of the voiceless in Punjab."

Convener of EcoSikh, Dr. Rajwant Singh, said: "This is perhaps the first time that so many individuals and organizations and business leaders have gathered on the environment issue. We are thrilled with the response from all over Punjab. A clean environment is a basic human right and it has become an urgent issue for the future of Punjab. No action is no longer an option and we must support each other to bringing activism in all aspects of the society."

Prominent industrialist Ranjodh Singh, M.D, G.S Estates, Ludhiana, inaugurated the event: "We have to flow like the pure water of Gangotri, though few in number, we

have to march with a clear vision and well defined path. We should learn to tolerate each other and not blame different sections for the pollution of Punjab. Each one of us has the responsibility.”

Principal of Ramgarhia College, Narinder Kaur Sandhu, emphasized the role of women in the environment movement. “Women of the society are equally responsible to bring change in the environment of Punjab.” She emphasised the relationship between the earth and women for “having a very big heart, and their presence will ensure a successful outcome”.

Professor Joga Singh, Head of Guru Nanak Polytechnic College, Ludhiana shared his practical experiences with the audience that how he and his team of students had worked in Billa Village and transformed its dirty pond to a stadium and developed a low cost sewerage system in the village. He mentioned how the villagers participated equally to save and glorify their land, and talked about harnessing youth energy and renewable natural energy. He openly invited the audience to network with him and his student groups for any assistance on any environmental projects.

Balwinder Lakhewali, President of the Nature Tree Foundation presented a slide show to highlight the role of trees in a life of man or woman. He emphasized how only native trees of Punjab should be planted in Punjab.

Youth representative from Ludhiana, S. Harnav Bir Singh, declared that youth should check who, to follow on any social cause. He said that they must explore Bhagat Puran Singh as their hero, a man who stood alone for the sake of Punjab’s environment. He suggested that environment should be a part of religious vow during *Amrit Sanchar* among Sikhs. He said, “We should act rather complain in such an alarming situation.”

Rajbir Singh of Pingalwara Trust reminded the audience of the contribution of the late environmentalist Bhagat Pooran Singh. He gave details of natural farming and how it is yielded a record breaking crop of sugarcane.

Anupam Nanda of Punjab Energy Developmental Agency (PEDA) offered to help gurdwaras and villages develop energy plans based on renewable resources like solar power.

Industrialist Manjit Singh Khalsa said his colleagues are equally motivated to join the environment movement. “All of us are leaders and should not wait for action.”

The Audience

The audience included soil conservationists from Mohali, Doctors from Ludhiana, Organic Agriculturists from Khadur Sahib, Pingalwara and Nabha, Educationists from Ludhiana, Historians from Chandigarh, Village developers from Hoshiarpur, Ex-Sarpanch from Gurdaspur, Director of Punjab State Industrial Corporation LTD, Manjit

Singh Khalsa, K.S. Benipal, Focal Point Welfare Association, Ludhiana. Religious organizations included Sukrit, Guru Gobind Singh Study Circle, Shub Karman society from Hoshiarpur and many students from Jawaddi Taksal in Ludhiana. Other participants included Paramvir Singh Mavi, J.S. Kahlon, Arvinder Dhingra from GNE College, Mohan Singh Lotey, Principal Raja Singh, Navjot Singh of Ajoka Punjab. Sakshi Jain of Industrialist family in Ludhiana, Buta Singh from Ghurala Village, Industrialist Harbinder Singh, Iqbal Singh of Guru Gobind Singh Study Circle, Rattan Deep Chawla of Ramgarhia College, Farmers Gurdev Singh and Nirmal Singh and Organic farmer Inderjit Singh Sarhali, Rashpal Singh of Subh Karman Society, Hoshiarpur, Music Director Ravinder Singh, Ramesh Singla, a Steel Industrialist from Ludhiana.

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